



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

**Fabens man, female associate indicted in connection to alien death case**  
***ICE investigation linked ‘coyotes’ to April 27<sup>th</sup> death of 14-year-old El Salvadoran girl***

EL PASO, Texas — A federal grand jury here yesterday indicted a Fabens, Texas, resident on charges of alien smuggling which resulted in the death of a teen-age girl from El Salvador earlier this year. This indictment followed an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents.

The indictment charges Jose Alfredo Sifuentes-Sandoval, 44, with one count each of conspiracy to smuggle aliens, encouraging and inducing entry and harboring, both resulting in death, aggravated identity theft, and three counts of alien smuggling for profit. Also charged in the conspiracy count is Sifuentes’ associate, Amalia Baquera, aka “La Tia,” who is now believed to be in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico.

The indictment alleges that from Oct. 20, 2005 to June 9, 2006, Sifuentes and Baquera conspired to smuggle into the United States and harbor hundreds of illegal aliens, including Leybi Lorena Vigil Claros, a 14-year-old girl from El Salvador, the so-called “Texas 20 Girl.”

On April 27, Emergency Medical Service personnel and El Paso County Sheriff’s deputies responded to a 911 call from Sifuentes’ residence at 1340 Leaf St. in Fabens, Texas. When they arrived, authorities discovered a girl in the backseat of a van without a pulse or spontaneous respiration. She was taken to Del Sol Medical Center, but attempts to resuscitate her were unsuccessful. An autopsy revealed she died of a pulmonary thromboembolism.

Sifuentes originally told deputies that he found the girl on the side of Highway Texas 20 and attempted to get her medical treatment. However, further investigation by ICE agents revealed that Sifuentes allegedly smuggled her into the United States at the Fabens Port of Entry, and failed to seek timely medical attention despite her showing signs that she was gravely ill.

“The indictment of these two accused ‘coyotes’ goes to the heart of ICE’s commitment to combat alien smuggling by dismantling criminal enterprises that seek only to profit from the misfortune of others,” said Troy C. Henley, special agent-in-charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in El Paso. “We will continue to work closely with our federal, state and local law enforcement partners to arrest and prosecute ruthless alien smugglers who place hundreds of lives in harms way.”

U.S. Customs and Border Protection authorities arrested Sifuentes at the Fabens Port of Entry on June 9. At that time Sifuentes was attempting to illegally smuggle two aliens into the United States by claiming that they were his U.S. citizen wife and daughter. He remains in federal custody. Authorities will seek Baquera’s formal extradition from Mexico. If convicted, both Sifuentes and Baquera face up to life in federal prison.

The El Paso County Sheriff’s Office Criminal Enterprise Unit (CEU) assisted in this investigation.

“This is one of the first cases the CEU has been fortunate to work in partnership with ICE. CEU worked closely with our federal partner to dismantle a human-trafficking organization,” said El Paso County Sheriff Leo Samaniego.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys J. Brandy Gardes and William F. Lewis Jr., Western District of Texas, are prosecuting this case.

An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.

#ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*